526 After the bath a dry longyi is slipped on over the wet one which is then
291 washed clean straight away. The poorest, who do not always possess a
515 spare longyi, sometimes let themselves into a stream gradually, lifting the longyi higher as they go in, and when the water is bosom-high they keep the garment on their head, letting it down again as they emerge. Our use for the adaptability of the longyi was to stand on a diving platform with it opened wide at the bottom, jump feet first and let the air rush in, nicking the longyi in at the ankles as we struck the water. This

makes you land with a balloon which floats you for a minute or two like those swollen celluloid ducks in babies' tubs. My friend Tin Tin Thoung was just like a swan on these occasions; she was not pretty normally, being very thin and angular, but she had a long and graceful neck, and when she floated on the water, gliding along with her neck rising out of her big round longyi, she looked like a beautiful swan to me.
[262] After bathing, the Taik Wans' mother had basketfuls of Indian corn, the tender ones boiled and the tougher ones roasted, and dishes of the peeled marians doused in fish sauce awaiting us.

981 Besides these social visits there were special festivals that came with
585 the months, and occasions common to every family's history—the ear-boring of the girl, the initiation into the priesthood of the boy, and marriages of grown-up children—which had to be celebrated in traditional forms. Most minkadaws preferred to hold marriage ceremonies in Rangoon, Moulmein or Mandalay to have as much fashion and show as possible, but the ear-boring (*nadwin*) and initiation into priesthood (*shinbyu*) find a better background in country towns. Nadwin is the coming of age of a girl, not for marriage, but for the initiation into the pleasant vanities of a woman's life. It is fine enough to sit with a rich

and full dress on a cushion, the centre of the crowd of people who have been invited for feasting, to have the ears pierced with a gold pin and after this always to wear diamond ear-rings, but the ceremony has no deeper significance than that the parent feels he has done the best for his daughter at this stage of her life. The shinbyu, however, is much more than a social event. It has a religious meaning of the fullest beauty.

Although the women of Burma figure as actively and have the same rights as men in the fields of business, property, and professions of the modern world, we always keep alive in us the religious feeling that we are "below" mankind. It is not so much a feeling that women are a lower race as that a man has the nobility of manhood in him. We call it *hpon*, the glory, the holiness of a man, and we respect this not with subservience but with the same feelings as we respect monks and parents. A wife does not throw her longyi across her husband's bed, she does not touch any of his possessions with her feet in carelessness, she uses a separate mug for her bathwater. A bad wife who does not respect her husband's manhood does him the greatest harm, for a man cannot prosper if his hpon is hampered; indeed, some women who indulge in black magic deliberately *hpon-nein* their husbands, that is, lower his hpon by carelessly wielding brooms above his head, throwing women's longyis on his pillow, thus making him subordinate, and believing that this makes the wife's will prevail over the husband's. But such a man can never make progress in his career.

It is the Buddhist belief that the attainment of a perfect life is as a man, as shown in Gautama Buddha's life as Prince Siddhartha. Prince Siddhartha was the son of King Suddhodana, who surrounded his son with all the luxury and splendour that his kingdom on the slopes of the Himalayas could offer. To prevent his son from renouncing his princely life for one of poverty and meditation he kept all sights of sorrow, sickness and decay hidden from him. He found him a perfect wife, beautiful, meek and affectionate, who bore him a son; but the prince in his excursions to a park in the city came across a decrepit old man, a sick old man and a corpse, which sights made him sad at the thought of human misery in this world. The next time, however, he saw a hermit which suggested that peace of mind was achievable by renunciation of the vanities of the world. On the night that his son was born, Prince Siddhartha made the Great Renunciation and left everything to go into solitude and find out the cause of misery, and the means of its removal. The Dhammapada says of the world :

> Come! behold this world which is like a decked royal chariot, wherein the foolish immerse themselves; but for the wise there is no attachment.

779 *881 792 It is this renunciation[1] which we symbolize in the shinbyu ceremony when a boy leaves his home and lives in the order. A parent who fails to hold the ceremony or get his son initiated in some other way fails in his first duty towards his son, and those who hold a shinbyu for orphans or the sons of the poor achieve great merit.

To provide a background symbolic of Prince Siddhartha's circumstances, parents spend as much as they can afford; a flagged pavilion is put up before the house, a multitude of people are invited for feasting, the boy is dressed in princely garments and jewels, and rides around the town on a white horse, with a procession following. For him to return and wash the powder off his face, to doff the turban and show the newly shaven head, to change the glittering clothes of silk for a plain yellow [292] robe showing golden on the bare brown skin,—this is moving indeed. And when he comes back the next day in procession with other monks, his eyes cast down and his bowl before him, his mother makes obeisance to him for the first time, not as her son now but as one of the priestly order, a hpongyi, a "great glory". That must be a moment of spiritual plenitude in a mother's life.

881 792 I do not remember much about my brother's shinbyu, but I remember the beauty of his face as he came back in procession on that first day. A good face has its nobility enhanced by the complete absence of such adornment, even as is provided by the frame of hair or the line of neck clothing; it has to stand alone. I am often struck with the beautiful calm faces of some older monks. There is a look of repose which they wear easily after years of daily meditation and freedom from petty irritations and personal relationships, and a glow to the brown skin which is the result of years spent in clean and open surroundings, with sufficient to eat, and regularity of hours; the strongly marked eyebrows giving a nobility to the face when the head has been shorn. The unconscious reflection of this look on the face of a small boy touches us profoundly; there is a sweet solemnity on the young shaven face; the most mischievous boys become awed and chastened without any prompting.

881 792 565 [563] In recent years, we have had a full dress shinbyu in the family for my husband's nephew, Sao Sai Long, who as the heir to the Shan State of Kengtung was initiated into the priesthood with the full panoply due to Buddhist royalty. A long wide bamboo pavilion was set up, beginning with a high shelf for the offerings to all the monasteries in the town, the next platform for the monks who were to receive Sao Sai Long into their monastery, the next lower for the attendant boys who were also to be initiated, and for the *palin* (the jewelled *chaise longue* on which Sao Sai Long was to recline), the next for the family, and successively lower ones for the various grades of the people. (The

[1] The Great Renunciation of Prince Siddhartha--Analyst

European officials and friends were given chairs in deference to their stiffer joints, but the chairs which eventually raised them higher than the family were placed on a side platform which had been cleverly made two inches lower than the family's platform.) On the day of the actual initiation, tall vases on the high shelf held robes, fans and slippers as offerings to the monks, and rupee coins put into long net cylinders to get around the rule that monks should not touch money. Sitting against this were a row of monks with eyes downcast, below and before them were the *shinlaungs*, sixteen little attendant boys all powdered white with silk clothes and golden chains around their necks. On the couch sat Sao Sai Long, Sao Thiri Raza, his face unpowdered but glowing with the beauty of his race, his clothes of finest silk and gold, on his head a jewelled crown sitting proudly above his young face.

Three days in succession before the actual initiation day he sat like this in front of the assembled people, and when the drums took up the strange sad music which is traditionally played for the departure of a king, he stepped into a throne-seat that was lifted high on an elephant to go in procession round the town. The music and the splendour of Buddhist kingship in these days of government officials stirred the unrealized, half forgotten roots in our breasts; it made us feel things we had known in some other world and brought tears to our eyes. Sao Sai Long, my nephew aged 14, who had just returned from a year at King's School, Canterbury, who had never given me a moment's peace with his affectionate and irreverent ways, and who is even now riding wildly round an Australian sheep farm, felt and looked a dignity which he has never achieved before or since, as he was lifted high on an elephant and rode around his beautiful old city with its big trees and mountains, with spears, banners, white and gold umbrellas before him, a king for the last time in full pomp. He must have felt like Tamurlaine:

Oh, 'tis passing fair to be a king,
And ride in triumph through Persepolis.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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CHAPTER IV

EAR-BORING

881 304 THE first great event in a Burmese girl's life is the nā-twin mingala, the boring of her ears. She is not out of the doll stage till that happens. She may have toddled after her mother to the market with a basket of fruit on her head, long before the ear-boring, but that ceremony is as much an epoch to her as putting on the yellow robe, or getting his legs tattooed, is to her brother. Ever afterwards she will look upon every male as a possible lover. No more taking alternate whiffs at a big green cheroot with little Maung Po; no more teasing Po Shan to let her have a taste of those fine nettè mangoes his father has got down from Mandalay; no more dawdling about the streets by herself, watching the small boys playing with the round gôn nyin seeds, or having a hurried glimpse of the puppet play, while she is supposed to be at home looking after the house with her little brother. When she walks out now it will be with her mother, or an aunt, or married sister, as a chaperone; and if she goes to the play it will be in formal procession, and with all her finest clothes on. Nothing like getting the ears bored to set a girl thinking about the wave of the hair that falls down in lappets by her ears, or the best recipe for the fragrant straw-coloured thanaka, with which she tints her face and charms half the senses of the gallants. It even alters her walk. She sets about practising the coquettish sway of the body in walking, which is considered so attractive, and which a philosophical matter-of-fact Darwinian would probably declare was first of all due to an involuntary throwing out of the heel with each step to keep the folds of the dress

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2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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modestly closed in front, and to prevent the dainty slipper, just covering her toes and no more, from slipping off the foot. However that may be, it is an accomplishment indispensable to a Burmese belle. She takes as much pains over it as she does with her jetty tresses. In a word, the nā-twin mingala transforms the girl into a woman, just as much as admission to a monastery makes the boy a man. It is her baptism, and is the distinctive mark of her race. Most of the men get their ears bored too, but the ceremony is not so solemn with them, and latterly is not so universal, at any rate not in the towns on the coast.

The ceremony takes place at the age of twelve or thirteen, just when the girl has attained puberty in fact. Her sadā is submitted to a soothsayer, that a fortunate day and hour may be chosen, and that being fixed, a great feast is prepared, and all the friends of the family and the relations are invited. An invitation to an ear-boring feast is a very urgent matter. No one can refuse without a very good excuse, and serious business is often postponed to the demands of such a ceremony. Everybody comes early, and sits down in any place he can find round about the front part and sides of the room, the girl, with all her female relatives about her, reclining on a mat at the back. The bedin sayā stalks about gazing at a mysterious strip of palm-leaf, or apparently wrapped in deep thought. Beside him is the professional ear-borer. He carries the needles, which are almost always pure gold, and even in the case of the poorest, never of any baser metal than silver. Rich people very often have them set at the ends with precious stones. At last the soothsayer gives the sign that the favourable moment has arrived. The ear-borer moves up immediately and passes the needles through the lobe of the ear, sometimes using a cork as they do in England, but more often letting them pass between two of his fingers. The girl, who has been worked up into a high state of excitement and terror by all the preparations, usually struggles and shrieks as hard as she can, but the women round about hold her down, and the band of music in the street outside strikes up a rapid movement and drowns her lamentations, while all the visitors burst into a flood of talk

Puberty and Adolescence. The Burmese view, in the village, is that one is an adult when one becomes physiologically mature. Upon reaching pubescence boys as well as girls are referred to by a term which means 'virgin.' The connotation is that the individual has now entered a period of life in which the dangers of temptation are especially great and in which correspondingly greater precautions are necessary. 881

A girl's first menstruation is believed to cleanse her system; frequently, such phenomena as eruption of the skin or sexually delinquent behavior preceding the first menstrual period are regarded as evidence that the 'blood is trying to flow.' Although the idea of uncleanliness is associated with menstruation, there is no segregation of the girl or any particular fear of contamination. So long as she conducts herself with propriety and modesty a girl is free to move in public at this time. 881 841

Ideally, the attainment of puberty is the time for the girl's ear-piercing ceremony, but in actual practice this often takes place as early as her seventh or eighth year -- if it occurs at all. There is a tendency for this ceremony to be omitted in Tadagale. Since it is a feast occasion involving considerable expense to her family, the trend is towards holding a single ceremony, at which several girls who are related will have their ears pierced. The initiate is dressed for this occasion in the traditional garb of the Burmese Court, and also wears a spired-helmet type of head dress. The villagers gather at the family house for the event. An elderly woman rubs an anaesthetic plant substance on the girl's ear lobes and pierces them with gold pins. These pins are left in the ears, bent back. Later, if larger holes are desired, rolled leaves may be inserted. The family presents gifts to the assembled guests; often these are conventionalized tokens, such as inscribed cigars or fans. 852

On the same occasion boys of approximately the same age may be initiated into the Buddhist monkhood. 881 792

Boys' Initiation. For Burmese boys one of the most important events is initiation as a novice into the Buddhist monkhood. The traditional rite of shinbyu continues to be an important part of Burmese culture, in the urban as well as the rural setting. In the towns and cities, of course, it has been affected by the greater contact with western culture; the procession, for example, is likely to take place in automobiles rather than on horseback and on foot. Nevertheless, city-bred as well as rural Burmese feel it is very important for social as well as religious reasons that their sons be initiated; and everywhere the shinbyu involves large expenditures if not great sacrifices, requires the services of many people for its planning and carrying out, and is the occasion par excellence for joyous celebration as well as religious solemnity. 369 177

No two shinbyu ceremonies are the same in detail. The circumstances of the sponsoring families, the physical setting, the idiosyncrasies of individual monks all make for variation. Here we shall indicate the main features of the initiation ceremony as observed in Tadagale. 881 792

The ceremony proper is held on the open-sided ground floor of a wooden building, in the upper portion of which the monks and their pupils live. On the south side of this room is a platform raised about three feet above the ground, on which the monks sit during the proceedings. The room is decorated with various hangings, tapestries, and net curtains; the floor is covered with mats and carpets. Four tables front the platform, on which are placed various

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objects used in the ceremony. The largest table is covered with a lace cloth and on it stands an alabaster statue of the Buddha in a carved and decorated case. Before the figure of the Buddha are offerings of flowers, water, a candle bananas and coconuts, placed in a special bowl. There is also a dish of puffed rice, a carved gilt bowl, and three new bowls, the latter for the initiates. Each of the bowls contains some of the traditional articles required for a monk: beads, water cups, needle and thread, a straight razor. The carved, gilt begging bowl symbolizes the type used by the Buddha when he was on earth. The second table contains offerings of bananas and coconuts for the monks, and richly decorated gilt trays symbolic of the kind used in the days of the Burmese kings but now only for purposes of decoration. These will be carried by young girls in the procession. The third table contains robes and other gifts for the several monks who are invited to the ceremony. On the fourth table are mats and pillows for the initiates to use. They will be presented to the monks as gifts afterwards.

The elaborate preparations for the ceremony begin on the morning of the preceding day. Young girls go from house to house to borrow betelnut boxes, mats and carpets. In the afternoon a five piece orchestra, hired for the occasion, arrives at the place of the ceremony. It consists of two large drums, a small drum, a wind instrument, a xylophone, and cymbals. Now an elder makes
534 offerings to the spirits (nats). Bananas, a coconut and a lighted candle are placed on a tray. The elder holds the tray and recites invocations to the good and the evil spirits. The evil spirits are implored not to harass any person who participates in the ceremony, because it is a work of merit; the good spirits are reminded of the meritorious nature of the ceremony and asked to watch over and protect the proceedings. As the spirits are so addressed he swings the tray towards each member of the orchestra in turn, sometimes three, sometimes nine, and sometimes twelve times. The orchestra continues to play intermittently throughout the afternoon, evening, and into the night. Early in the evening the young men of the village come to the monastery with their own musical instruments -- mandolins, guitars, and violins -- and sing and dance into the early morning hours. The orchestra group remains at the monastery all night.

252 About midnight, a group of men who are responsible for cooking the food set to work at this task. Women do not normally cook meals for an occasion as large as this; it is felt that the quantities of food required and the amount of labor involved is too much for them to manage. Around three hundred people are expected at a large shinbyu in the village. The cooks, about a dozen middle-
[522] aged men, sit around the fire they have lighted in a clearing a short distance from the monastery, drink tea, smoke, and make jokes. One man is introduced to the group as the 'all-Burma curry-cooking expert'; another is called 'No. 1 soup cook'; a third is dubbed 'best rice cook of the village.' During the night they prepare large quantities of boiled rice, pork curry, sour bean sprouts, fried fish paste, and a vegetable soup.

[291] Early on the morning of the day for the ceremony, the initiates are dressed by friends of their families. After a bath, thanakha, an astringent-like paste made from ground tree bark and water, is applied to their faces. Then they don silk longyis and thin, white muslin jackets, beneath which they wear cotton vests. The longyi is very ornate, made of heavy silk, and is seamless. Gold chains and necklace, bracelets and rings are put on. The head dress is a fine silk cloth, wound round the head, and decorated with garlands of flowers.

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Guests begin to arrive later in the morning at the site of the ceremony. As each enters he is given a large cheroot by one of the girls who is posted at the entrance to the room. The guests are seated on mats before the platform for the monks and the tables of offerings described above. They are served tea and pickled tea leaf while the orchestra entertains them.

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The young men of the village arrive with their musical instruments, which they will play during the procession to follow. They join the other guests, taking seats on mats. The continued music of the orchestra forms a background to the constant buzz of conversation among the assembled guests.

The initiates are carried into the room -- on this day their feet must not touch the ground -- and seated in chairs facing the monks' platform. A few persons spontaneously break into dance as the music goes on; more guests arrive; the horses which have been hired for the procession are brought to the scene and tethered nearby. Gradually the guests are summoned, in groups, to eat in a nearby building.

When all have had their meal, the procession is made ready. The young girls are given the carved trays and betelnut containers. The initiates make obeisance (shiko) with folded hands to the monks, as do all the guests. A monk chants prayers and blessings, the audience sings responses. The initiates now are carried from the room and seated on the horses, which will carry them around the village. A golden umbrella is opened and raised over each initiate, whose young male attendants hold it aloft, guide his horse, and carry him on their shoulders whenever he is required to dismount.

About mid-morning the procession leaves the monastery grounds, lead by the fathers of the initiates and young male relatives carrying the lacquer begging bowls which the initiates will use, followed by their mothers and female relatives bearing mats and pillows. Next follow the young girls, each carrying a decorated tray or container. After them come the initiates on horseback, led by their male attendants and followed by the young men's musical band which dances, sings, and plays as it moves along. The guests followed in their rear.

This procession wends it way along the road that links Tadagale with Kokine Road, and arrives at a spirit shrine. The guests make obeisance to the shrine and sit on the ground. The initiates are carried to the shrine by their attendants, to be shown to the spirits so that these beings will know of their work of merit and thus restrain their evil influences. The procession resumes, going along the main village path to the large Buddha shrine located about midway along this route. Here the boys are again carried from their horses to make obeisance, after which the procession sets out on the last part of the route, to the monastery again.

Now the initiates are lifted from their horses and carried, shoulder-high, three times around the monastery building, in clockwise direction. They are followed by their fathers, young male kin, their mothers and the young girls bearing the trays and containers.

As the third round of the building is completed and the group reaches the entrance to the room of the ceremony and tries to enter, they find themselves blocked by two women who hold a silk scarf across the entrance and loudly demand a huge sum of money as payment for permission to pass. The father of an initiate offers them, instead, five balls of candied puffed rice. Much good-

14: Brant E-5 (1949-50) 1954 APl Burma
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natured bickering and banter takes place, in the midst of which the boys' attendants carry them off and hide them nearby, out of sight of the crowd. They demand ransom. Finally, the women who have blocked the entrance accept the offer of puffed rice balls, and the attendants who have hidden the initiates are persuaded to reduce the huge sum they have demanded to a token amount. The boys are returned, the crowd enters the ceremonial room, and the rite may proceed.

Sometime before noon the monks and the pupils of the monastery school have a meal, their last of the day, while the assembled guests sit in groups sipping iced soft drinks, smoking and gossiping.

About two o'clock gongs are struck to summon the monks to the ceremony. Now the initiates no longer wear jewelery or flowers, symbols of worldliness; and the silk scarves which earlier were worn on their heads are now worn across their chests, under one arm and over the other shoulder. The initiates sit on mats before the chair on which the chief officiating monk will be seated. A new earthenware pot is filled with water, flowers are placed in it, and a few yards of white thread are twined around the flowers. The pot is placed on the table to the right of the monk's seat. Its presence is supposed to counteract any evil influences by spirits or humans. It is a warning to evil spirits and enemies not to mar the proceedings.

When the monks arrive the orchestra again begins to play and candles are lighted. The several monks ascend the platform and sit according to rank. The chief officiating monk sits, as indicated, in a chair below the platform, facing the initiates and assembled guests.

The initiates repeat after an elder prayers and requests that they be allowed to enter the monkhood. The audience intones prayers for the remission of its sins, and the chief officiating monk recites the Five-Fold Path of Buddha. Further prayers by the monks are recited, in Pali, and then the chief monk preaches a sermon. His emphasis is very strong on the great glory brought to parents through the sponsorship of an initiation ceremony for a son. There are numerous allusions to incidents in the history of Buddhism to illustrate the importence of shinbyu and the even greater significance of entrance into the monkhood for life.

Following the sermon, the fathers of the initiates ascend the platform and place before each monk an offering of a new robe in an aluminum bowl.

At this point comes the ritual of water-pouring. The initiates' parents and nearest of kin slowly pour water, drop by drop, from bowls into cups which are set on the ground, as the chief monk recites prayers to call the attention of the earth spirit to the deed of merit being performed. It is believed that if they should be reincarnated in some lower form, they can be reminded by the earth spirit of their good deeds, and this will relieve them of their suffering and help to transform them into better reincarnated forms.

Now, threads are taken from the enclosure in which the initiates sat during the sermon. Their entrance into this enclosure, which followed their asking for admission to the monkhood, symbolized their acceptance into the order. These threads are now tied across the initiates' chests, over one shoulder and under the other.

The orchestra plays as the initiates depart for the adjoining building to change into ordinary clothes, eat their last meal of the day, and bathe. Some guests now leave; borrowed articles, such as plates, cups and mats are gathered up for return to their owners, and eventually the orchestra departs.

The initiates return to the front of the building in which the ceremony took place. They sit on mats for the shaving of their heads. Two women hold a long piece of white cloth before them to catch the hair as several men proceed to wet their heads and shave them clean with straight razors.

Once more the boys leave to bathe, then return and are seated before the chief monk. Their robes held in their hands before them, they recite prayers, give their robes to the monk, and ask him to dress them properly in the monkish garb.

Their robes donned, they squat before the monk and recite additional prayers, now following very carefully the special intonation appropriate to monks. The ceremony proper is complete.

The following morning, early, a few relatives and close friends go to the monastery. The monks, including the novices, are offered food by them. A monk recites the Five-Fold Path, and then the ceremony of pouring water drop by drop is performed. Names are given the initiates -- special monastic names which they will bear only for the duration of their novitiate.

In former times, and still today in the very remote villages of Burma, an initiate might spend many months, possibly several years, in the monkhood. Sometimes a boy would remain a monk for life. Today in Tadagale, as almost everywhere, initiates spend only a token period of about one week in the monkhood. During this time, they live the austere existence of the order, rising very early, spending long periods in prayer recitals, and abstaining from food after noon until the following morning. The short period of life as a novice is strongly in contrast with the easy-going, carefree childhood days that precede it. Some boys approach the time of their shinbyu with feelings of trepidation, and all are glad when the period spent in the monastery is over and they can return to the much less stern discipline of their parents.

Courtship and Marriage. Young people in the village find ample opportunities to assess each other's manners, physical appearance, and personality, in the company of others at feasts and various gatherings. If a young man and woman are together apart from the company of others, people assume that sex relations are involved. In fact, such going together is spoken of as 'getting married.' Villagers find it hard to conceive of a young unmarried couple associating on a purely friendly, non-sexual basis; such behavior is regarded as contrary to nature. But however much it occurs, unchaperoned association is not approved, much less encouraged.

Once a pair have decided they want to marry, the boy will inform his parents of his desire. They will already know, in a relatively small village such as Tadagale, something of the standing of the girl's family and of her dowry potentialities; in fact, as soon as they have sensed their son's interest in a particular girl, they will take steps to acquire this information. They will also ascertain whether acceptance by the girl's family is likely. Sometimes the approach to the girl's family is made directly; in other instances a female go-between will be employed. The latter is more likely when the girl's family

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must ask permission of the parents or Daw Aw Zar when they wish to go to town or anywhere else even when leaving for school. In a special sense the children are "owned" by the parents. Considerate children appreciate the efforts of their parents and take care of them when they become old. If he had a son he would have to make the financial arrangements to "put him through" the novitiation or SHIN PYU ceremony. The corresponding "initiation" ceremony of the girls, that of ear-boring has not been done for the daughters. For the KIN MUN TAT (name giving) or "christaining" of the eldest daughter, U Myaing bought 50 leaves of bread, as well as sugar and coconuts to feed the children of the village. The ceremony cost Rs. 90/- or 100/-. The ceremony for the second and third daughters was celebrated with a black rice preparation called KAUKHMYIN-BAUNG (treacle rice steamed). The ingredients consisted of 2 baskets of black rice (costing Rs. 10/-), 8 PYI of beans (costing Rs. 3/10), 2 condensed milk tins of sessamum oil (costing Rs. 1/-), 10 to 15 ticals of salt (costing 2 annas), and 4 coconuts. The family had to evacuate from Pathee before the ceremony of the youngest daughter. U Myaing was made a novice at the age of nine, together with six other young boys. The donors who were bearing the costs of the ceremony decked them out in fine clothes and in the evening, after being taught the stanza asking for the robes, they were made KOYINS. Charities were given . U Myaing remained seven days as a KOYIN. His SHIN PYU or novitiation ceremony costs altogether between Rs. 3000/- and Rs. 4000/- (for the seven boys), because, besides other expenses HTA MEINS were distributed free to all the women guests and PU SOLS to the men. U Myaing's grandfather bore the costs of making 14 boys KOYINS and one into an UPAZIN or monk. The whole village helped to cook the food for the reception. This help was entirely voluntary and the helpers did not wait till requests were made for their help.

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In times of financial difficulty U Myaing may borrow money from relations (preferred) or close friends. U Myaing's eldest brother is the first person to apply to - however, he does not have much money so cannot help in this way. But he can be depended on in various other ways. For example, he will help in a fight, or give good advice on where U Myaing might go for a job or to borrow money. A mainstay financially is U Myaing's mother's elder sister (Daw Gyi), Ma Ohn Nyunt,

23: Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
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553 which the family invites the people of the village. In the larger communities a written invitation may be sent, in which the name of the child is announced. The [431] feast occurs in the family house, to which the invited guests bring presents and where they may see the child. The only ritualized feature of this event is the washing of the child's hair, which is always done by an elderly person. This may occur, however, before the arrival of the guests.

Because of the significance and influence attributed to the personal name, it may be changed very readily and informally. If it is felt that ill fortune is in the offing, an announcement may be made in the village of change of one's name.

[551] Childhood nicknames as well as teknonymy are utilized by the Burmese, but not to the exclusion of use of the personal name.

Childhood. Burmese children are generally indulged and their existence is 857 more or less carefree and unencumbered by rigid discipline, apart from early 858 inculcation of respect for elders, until they are of educational age and considered capable of understanding the moral teachings of Buddhism. A male child is valued religiously, for at an early age he will be initiated into the monkhood, [851] remaining from a few days to several years, depending upon family circumstances and needs. The initiation of a son brings great religious merit to his parents.

In the Burmese village children are valued for the economic help they render. This will, of course, vary with family circumstances. But in the ordinary cultivator's family, sons and daughters help from the age of about nine or ten years in tending cattle, getting firewood, and winnowing rice. Children are also looked upon as a kind of social insurance for old age.

[884] *Puberty and Adolescence.* Apart from modern legal ideas concerning the attainment of adulthood, the Burmese view is that one is adult when physiologically mature. Upon reaching pubescence boys as well as girls are referred to by a ● 881 term meaning "virgin." The connotation is that the individual has now entered a period of life in which the dangers of temptation are especially great and in which corresponding precautions are necessary.

A girl's first menstruation is believed to cleanse her system; frequently, such phenomena as eruption of the skin or sexually delinquent behavior preceding the first menstrual period are regarded as evidence that the "blood is trying to flow." [841] Although the idea of uncleanliness is associated with menstruation, there is no segregation of the girl or particular fear of contamination. So long as she conducts herself with propriety and modesty a girl is free to move in public at this time.

304 881 Ideally, the attainment of puberty is the time for the girl's ear-boring cere-

23; Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

mony, but in actual practice this often takes place as early as her seventh or eighth year. Since this is a feast occasion involving considerable expense to her family, there is a tendency to hold a single ceremony, at which perhaps a pubescent girl, together with her younger sisters or cousins, will all have their ears bored. On the same occasion male children of approximately the same age may be initiated into the Buddhist monkhood.[5]

The girl initiate is dressed for the occasion in the traditional garb of the Burmese court, and in addition she wears a spired-helmet type of head dress. The villagers gather at her family's house for the event. An elderly woman rubs an anaesthetic plant substance on the girl's ear lobes and pierces them with gold pins. The pins are left in the ears, bent back. Later, if larger holes are desired, rolled leaves may be inserted. The family presents gifts to the assembled guests; often these are conventionalized tokens, such as inscribed cigars and fans.

Courtship and Marriage. Young people in the villages find ample opportunities to assess each other's manners, physical appearance, and personality in the company of others, at feasts and various gatherings. If a young man and woman are together apart from the company of others it is assumed that sex relations are involved. In fact, such going together is spoken of as "getting married." The Burmese find it hard to conceive of a young unmarried couple associating on a purely friendly, non-sexual basis: such behavior would be regarded as contrary to nature. However, unchaperoned association is disapproved and does not occur very frequently.

Once a pair have decided they wish to marry, the boy will inform his parents of his desire. They will already know, especially in the smaller villages, of the standing of the girl's family and of her dowry potentialities; in fact, as soon as they have sensed their son's interest in a particular girl they will take steps to acquire this information. They will also ascertain whether acceptance by the girl's family is likely. In a small community the approach may be made directly by the boy's parents. In larger centers a female go-between is more likely to be employed. The boy's parents will be informed by the girl's family that the decision must await the outcome of consultation with an astrologer concerning the compatibility of the birth dates of the prospective bride and groom. If the marriage is found to be an auspicious one—which it will usually be found to be if the girl's parents desire the match—an affirmative answer will be relayed to the boy's parents. The latter will then call upon her parents and in the presence of elders, not necessarily related to either family, formally ask for the girl's hand.

5 Description of the boy's initiation ceremony is being reserved for a separate publication.

29: Slater M-4 (no date) 1951 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

invariably in the same posture, seated, with one arm across his lap. The whole atmosphere is one of ordered, unhurried peace, whether within the timbered buildings, or within the surrounding compound.

But the monastery is seldom far away from the village, and this is of set purpose. The Buddhist *Saṃgha* in Burma might well be described as a teaching Order. "Of all charities, charity of learning is the noblest," observes a Buddhist layman,[27] and the monastery dispenses this charity freely. It provides the village school. There the boys learn to read and write. There, moreover, they are tutored in Buddhist lore, with a firm emphasis on ethical requirements. They learn the 'three Jewels' which enjoin reverence for the Buddha, the Law *(Dhamma)*, and the Order, and the five precepts – – not to kill, not to steal, not to lie, not to commit adultery, not to drink intoxicants. In the *Mingalā Thot* or "Song of Great Blessing," which they recite by heart[28], they learn that a wise and good man will seek to store up merit by fulfilling his domestic duties, by giving ample alms, by seeking 'self-knowledge' and by learning from holy men 'as chance affords.' The monastic ideal of utter renunciation, 'from all attachment free', is also indicated and 'Nirvana here' is said to be 'true happiness' leading to the Highest Bliss.[29] They will also learn stories of the Buddha's previous birth from the *Jātakas*, and, above all, the story of the historic Buddha.

But attendance at the day school is not their only initiation in the faith. Every Burman boy, at the age of puberty or earlier, is expected to leave home and become a boarder at the monastery for a period which may vary from weeks to years. "A Buddhist who has not been a *koyin* (novice) or donned the yellow robe," remarks a Burmese writer, "is looked upon as one who has missed the most essential (part) of his experience in this world." The village school often appears to be a merry jumble to the outsider, but during this time as a novice "each boy gets individual attention.... There is a wholesome atmosphere of intimacy and understanding between the teacher and the taught." Most of the novices return to secular life, but some remain to become fully ordained monks.[30]

The *shin-byu* ceremony, or rite of confirmation, which is another essential in the Burmese boy's initiation, generally precedes his entry to

[27] U Set, "Life in a *Phongyi Kyaung*," *Rangoon Times*, (May 13, 1931).

[28] See Appendix for fuller account of this Song and other Monastic instruction.

[29] "To understand the literature, 'serious' or popular, of Burma we cannot know the Pali Jātaka too well," M. H. Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma*, chap. v, pp. 81, 82.

[30] U Set, op. cit.; cf. Scott, *The Burman*, Vol. I, chaps. II, III, and IV.

29: Slater M-4 (no date) 1951 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

792
881

the monastery. It is a day of excited celebration. Recalling the Great Renunciation, when Gautama left the royal court in his quest for truth, the boy, attired in princely robes, is feasted by his family and friends until the moment when he casts his finery aside to don the yellow robe of the Order.[31]

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Girls experience a similar ceremonial initiation, when (to the accompaniment of vigorous music) their ears are pierced to take the ear-rings which are the sign of womanhood. They cannot attend the monastic schools with the boys, but other means are found for their education, and they certainly do not lag behind their brothers in intelligence, character or Buddhist zeal. Mrs Hla Oung recounts the story of a little maid taken to the monastery to be reminded of the five precepts, after some childish misdemeanour. (The monk was benign. "There was the faintest suspicion of a smile on his calm face, to show, I suppose, that her backsliding was not to be taken as a defection from the faith.") The 'charity of learning' seems, then, to be shared by girls as well as boys. The status, freedom and privileges of Burmese women have already been remarked and Mrs Hla Oung affirms vigorously that "the life of the Burmese woman is bound up in her religion. Buddhism has formed the character of the Burmese woman.... There are few Burmese women, even in the villages, who are unable to read and write," and the Buddhist scriptures form the ground work of their studies.[32]

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Not only are the monks numerous, but they are dispersed throughout the country. Every village has at least one monastery, and sometimes more. The educational influence of the Order has been, therefore, both organised and ubiquitous. In more recent times this influence has been challenged by new conditions. Government and mission schools have intervened, and the modern Burmese boy may only remain in the monastery as a novice for a brief, token period. But during the centuries which shaped the Burmese character and outlook, the monks as educators had no serious rivals.

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Nor has their ministry to the community been confined to education. Herbs and potions from the monastery are held in high esteem, especially in Upper Burma.[33] The monastery also serves as alms-house and asylum.

[31] For a good description of this ceremony v. Ananda Metteya, quoted by G. Appleton, *Buddhism in Burma*, pp. 22–23.

[32] Ma M. Hla Oung, "The Women of Burma," *Buddhism*, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 61 (September, 1903, Rangoon); cf. a later series by Daw Mya Sein, "Kin Sein Hla," *Burma Today*, published by the Burma Government in India, 1944, in which the influence of the Monastery is not so strongly emphasised.

[33] "Theirs is faith cure rather than medicine," writes a Burmese correspondent, who cites cures from snake-bite, leprosy and hydrophobia.